

Attachment C

National Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative (NSHTI)

Initiative Description/Summary: Through the National Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative (NSHTI), NRCS will assist producers to extend the growing season for high value crops in an environmentally safe manner. The initiative has the potential to assist producers in addressing a resource concern by improving plant quality, improving soil quality, and reducing nutrient and pesticide transport.

Note: The seasonal high tunnel practice is gaining recognition in many populated or urbanized areas. NRCS must consider and support all producers who submit an application regardless of where their operation is located. It is important to note that general program eligibility is not limited based on zoning. There is a common misconception that areas zoned as “urban” or “residential” (or other similar zoning types) are not eligible based on the zoning classification. However, while the applicant and land may meet program eligibility requirements, zoning may restrict a participant from installing certain practices. Participants who carry out conservation practices are responsible for obtaining the authorities, rights, easements, permits, or other approvals necessary for the implementation, operation, and maintenance of the conservation practices in keeping with the applicable laws and regulations.

As in previous years, the maximum practice extent for a Seasonal High Tunnel (798) eligible for a practice payment shall be five percent of an acre per agricultural operation. This can be a single or multiple structures for a maximum of five percent of one acre coverage.

Approved or Participating States:

- All States and Territories

Applicable Programs:

- Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) program – AMA states have the option to offer the NSHTI through the AMA program.
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) – All states must offer the NSHTI through EQIP.

Note: Unless otherwise specified, the guidance provided below applies to both AMA and EQIP.

Program Contact Information:

AMA – Dave Mason at (202) 720-1873; dave.mason@wdc.usda.gov

EQIP - Michael Whitt at (202) 690-2267; michael.whitt@wdc.usda.gov

ProTracts Requirements:

1. **Subaccount Guidance:**

A single subaccount for AMA and a single subaccount for EQIP have already been created in ProTracts to support the NSHTI called “FY 13 Seasonal High Tunnel” using the account type “Seasonal High Tunnels”. No additional subaccounts may be established at the State or Local level to further support the NSHTI.

2. **Application, Evaluation, and Ranking Tool Guidance – Choice Lists and Matrix Data:**

- a. Approved Land Types – States must assign the following land uses as eligible for this initiative:

Required Land Use
Cropland only

Note: No additional land types may be added or used to support this initiative.

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- b. Approved Natural Resource Concerns:

Soil Erosion
Sheet and Rill
Soil Condition
Organic Matter Depletion
Water Quality
Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Surface Water
Harmful Levels of Pesticides in Surface Water
Plant Condition
Plants not Adapted or Suited
Productivity, Health and Vigor

Note: No additional resource concerns may be added or used in ProTracts AERT to support this initiative.

- c. Core Practices Required to be offered for this initiative:

Practice Name	Practice Code
Seasonal High Tunnel System for Crops	798

- d. Supporting Practices that States may offer to support this initiative:

Practice Name	Practice Code
Critical Area Planting	342
Diversion	362
Grassed Waterway	412
Irrigation Reservoir	436
Irrigation System, Micro irrigation	441
Subsurface Drain	606
Surface Drainage, Field Ditch	607
Underground Outlet	620

Note: Conservation Activity Plans may not be offered as part of this initiative. The Seasonal High Tunnel System for Crops (798) practice may not be offered in any other subaccounts except for "FY 13 Organic Transition" and "FY 13 Certified Organic".

- e. AERT Matrix – State shall populate the appropriate core and supporting practices in the ProTracts AERT tool and associate the following resource concerns as shown in the following table.

NRCS Approved Resource Concerns		Soil Erosion	Soil Condition	Water Quality		Plant Condition	
NRCS Natural Resource Concern Categories for ProTracts Application, Evaluation, and Ranking Tool (AERT) "C" = Core practice (Bold) required to be offered. "X" - Supporting practices are optional to be offered		Sheet and Rill	Organic Matter Depletion	Excess Nutrients and Organics in Surface Water	Harmful Levels of Pesticides in Surface Water	Plants not Adapted or Suited	Productivity, Health and Vigor
Conservation Practice	Code						
Seasonal High Tunnel System for Crops	798		C	C	C	C	C

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Critical Area Planting	342	X					
Diversion	362	X					
Grassed Waterway	412	X					
Irrigation Reservoir	436					X	X
Irrigation System, Micro Irrigation	441					X	X
Subsurface Drain	606	X					
Surface Drainage, Field Ditch	607	X					
Underground Outlet	620	X					

3. Application, Evaluation, and Ranking Tool Guidance – Ranking Criteria Questions:

The total ranking points associated with initiative are to be distributed in AERT and approved ranking questions as follows:

AERT Level	Maximum Points	Point Percentage
National Level Ranking Questions	250	25%
State Level Ranking Questions	400	40%
Local Level Ranking Questions	250	25%
Efficiency Score	100	10%
Total Points for this initiative:	1,000	100%

4. The following are detailed instructions for populating ranking questions and points in ProTracts AERT.

National Level Ranking Criteria Requirements:

National ranking criteria are established in ProTracts by the national office.

National ranking criteria must account for 250 points or 25% of total points.

Only the following national level ranking criteria apply to this initiative. All other national ranking criteria not listed are not applicable and should be answered “No” by Designated Conservationists:

2. Clean and Abundant Water: Water Quality – Will the proposed project assist the producer to:
2b. Reduce sediment, nutrients or pesticides from agricultural operations located within a field that adjoins a designated “impaired water body” (TMDL, 303d, etc.)?
2c. Reduce sediment, nutrients or pesticides from agricultural operations located within a field that adjoins a “non-impaired water body”?
5. Soil Health:– Will the proposed project assist the producer to implement practice(s) which:
5a. Reduce erosion to tolerable limits (Soil “T”)?
5b. Improve soil tilth, organic matter, structure, health, etc.?
7. High Quality, Productive Soils, Healthy Plant and Animal Communities: Will the proposed project assist the producer implement practices which:
7d. Are identified in an Integrated Pest Management plan?
7e. Are identified in a Nutrient Management plan?
7f. Apply principles of adaptive nutrient management?
9. Business Lines – Conservation Implementation Additional Ranking Considerations - Will the proposed project result in:
9a. Implementation of all conservation practices scheduled in the contract on the CPA-1155 within three years of date of obligation?
9b. Improvement of existing conservation practices or conservation systems already in place at the time the application is accepted?

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9c. Implementation of practice(s) which will complete an existing conservation system or suite of practices?

State Level Ranking Criteria Requirements:

State ranking criteria are established in ProTracts by the national office.

State level ranking criteria must account for a total of 400 points.

2013 NSHTI State Ranking Criteria	2013 Points
Answer ALL of the following criteria that apply regarding the project's impact on addressing resource concerns. Maximum points 300.	
1a: The Schedule of Operations includes a seasonal high tunnel which will assist the producer to improve plant productivity, health and vigor.	75
1b: The Schedule of Operations includes a seasonal high tunnel which will assist the producer to grow plants in areas where they are not typically suited or adapted to grow.	75
1e: The Schedule of Operations includes practices or supports the use of existing practices (such as; cover crops, residue management, and residue and tillage management) which	50
1f: The Schedule of Operations includes supporting practices necessary to support a new or existing seasonal high tunnel in order to address soil erosion.	50
2. Answer ONE of the following criteria that apply regarding the projects ability to address excess nutrients and organics in surface water.	
2a: The Schedule of Operations includes a seasonal high tunnel which will assist the producer to reduce excess nutrients and organics in surface water from a field that adjoins a designated "impaired water body" (TMDL, 303d, etc.).	75
2b: The Schedule of Operations includes a seasonal high tunnel which will assist the producer to reduce excess nutrients and organics in surface water from a field that adjoins a "non-impaired water body".	25
3. Answer ONE of the following criteria that apply regarding the projects ability to address harmful levels of pesticides in surface water.	
3a: The Schedule of Operations includes a seasonal high tunnel which will assist the producer to reduce harmful levels of pesticides in surface water from a field that adjoins a designated "impaired water body" (TMDL, 303d, etc.).	75
3b: The Schedule of Operations includes a seasonal high tunnel which will assist the producer to reduce harmful levels of pesticides in surface water from a field that adjoins a "non-impaired water body".	25
Total Points:	400

Local Level Ranking Criteria Requirements:

Local ranking criteria are approved and entered into ProTracts at the State level.

Local level ranking criteria must account for a total of 250 points or at least 25% of total points available.

Cost Effectiveness Calculation:

By agency policy, the amount of points associated with the AERT cost efficiency calculation must be 100 points or 10% of total points available.

Screening Criteria Requirements:

No screening criteria shall be used to support this initiative.